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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5429
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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1325
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1295
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 4012
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2266
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4939
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3109
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1155
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2987
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001808

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL/AWH, DRL/IRF
NSC FOR E. PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/23/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: AMID PUBLIC PRESSURE, CONSIDERATION OF
CONTROVERSIAL BILL POSTPONED

REF: A. JAKARTA 1756
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 939 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Facing mounting public pressure, the Indonesian Parliament (DPR) was forced to postpone its vote on a controversial anti-pornography bill. The Islamic-oriented Prosperous Justice party (PKS) attempted to force a vote on the matter. Opponents of the bill ramped up their criticism, however, asserting that the bill undermines the country's pluralist traditions and the vote was postponed. Support for the bill is seen by observers as a means for parties to gain favor with conservative Muslims ahead of next year's national elections. It is not clear when the bill will next come up for review. END SUMMARY.

MOUNTING PUBLIC PRESSURE DELAYS BILL

[1](#)2. (SBU) The vote on the controversial anti-pornography bill has been postponed under mounting public pressure. The PKS attempted to force a vote on the bill, originally scheduled for September 23, which would have all but guaranteed its passage given support from several key parties. Among other matters, the bill defines pornography, in part, as "sexual material" in the form of "drawings, sketches, illustrations, photographs, text, sound, moving pictures, animation, cartoons, poetry, conversations or any other form of communicative message" (see ref A for further details). In general, critics have argued that the bill is much too broad, and could undermine privacy and women's rights. Liberals, Christians and Hindus also argued that the bill undermines the country's pluralist traditions. Supporters say it will improve Indonesia's "moral climate."

[1](#)3. (SBU) With passage apparently in sight, the bill's liberal opponents got their act together. In the past week, they sponsored numerous demonstrations in various parts of the country, including in Bali, in Jogjakarta, in front of Parliament, and elsewhere. These demonstrations apparently spooked the DPR, which essentially agreed to punt on the

matter and the vote was delayed.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS INCONCLUSIVE

14. (SBU) One aspect of the bill's failure to move to passage were recent public consultations sponsored by the DPR. Public reaction was reportedly sharply divided in public fora on the bill held in Maluku, South Sulawesi, South Kalimantan and Jakarta last week. In light of the various reactions, Yoyoh Yusroh, a PKS member of the special committee deliberating the bill in Parliament, said the bill's "deliberation period" had to be extended to allow further public discussion.

NEXT STEPS

15. (C) Given the recent setback, it is not clear when the bill will be reviewed again in the DPR. PKS and other Islamic-oriented parties have made clear that the bill is a priority. That said, the influential Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) has come out strongly against it. While Golkar, the largest single party in Parliament is for it, many members of Golkar--a secular-oriented party--are actually uncomfortable with it. Given this and the fact that the DPR--in typical Indonesian style--likes to pass things with a modicum of consensus, it is not clear when the bill might re-appear.

A BID FOR SUPPORT FROM CONSERVATIVES

16. (C) This consensus looks elusive, to put it mildly. One PDI-P MP told us that the entire bill is bad. This contact told us that the bill's definition of pornography is not

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based on the basic principles of criminal law, but rather on "morality as defined by the Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI)"--quasi-government body of Islamic scholars--and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In effect, the DPR seemed to be trying to curry favor with Muslim groups, according to this contact.

17. (C) That may be the precise point. Given elections in 2009, most parties are indeed trying to gain favor with Muslim conservatives. PKS is likely to continue to press the matter and, if they make some adjustments to the bill, they may well get their way due to the current political climate. As for the GOI itself, it is not pushing hard for the bill, but it has come out for its eventual passage.

HUME